

**DESTINATION:
HEAVEN – OUR
ETERNAL
HOME**

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December 6, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: Let us follow Jesus closely as He *knows* the way and *is* the way to Heaven.

Congregational reading: John 14:1-6 NKJV

Scriptures: John 14:2-6; Matt. Ch. 5 – 7 (selected verses – see below); Matt. 4:17; Rev. 7:9-17; Rev. 19:4-9; Rev. 21:1-9,22-27.

John 14:1-6 NKJV “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

There is one thing we can say that applies to the vast majority of people we meet: everyone wants to go to heaven and thinks they are well on their way to getting there.

Heaven is a word we often use to describe the best sensory experiences we have. When we taste something we absolutely love, we say: “Mm, mm, mm! That is heavenly!”

When you go to a place that has the most beautiful scenery you’ve ever seen, sunny skies and the temperature you

love the best, you're likely to say: "Wow – this is paradise! Feels like heaven to me!"

There are experiences we have of sights, sounds, smells or feelings; the best of which we describe as "divine" or "heavenly."

When someone passes from this life and you go to their funeral, you never hear the pastor say: "Billy was a scoundrel and a renegade; a dirty liar and a cheat. He's going straight to hell." Everyone hopes, wishes, prays and says: "Billy has gone to a better place". By which, of course, they mean Heaven.

We certainly don't want to think that life can be bad here, only to be followed by worse in the life to come. We all want better. We all want to go to Heaven.

When Matthew recorded Jesus' most famous discourse – the "Sermon on the Mount", the phrases "heaven", "the kingdom of heaven" and "our Father in heaven" were mentioned a total of 16 times. Apparently, Heaven was very important to Jesus. Here are some of the things He said:

Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matt. 5:19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your

Father in heaven is perfect.

Matt. 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven.

Matt. 6:20 ...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matt. 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Matt. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Jesus made many other references to the ‘kingdom of God’ and/or ‘kingdom of heaven’ during His ministry, but as we read in the John 14 text, He also took time in His last address to His disciples to remind them of what lay ahead in their future.

John 14:2-6 NKJV In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Everything we do in this life must be anchored in this one thing: knowing Jesus and following Him. He is the only one who can lead us to heaven. He is the only one who knows the way. In fact, beyond what Thomas (or anyone else at the time) really understood, Jesus not only *knows* the way; He *is* the way to Heaven!

Our journey to Heaven begins with the simple process of repentance: changing our thought, mind and opinion about God and His word. Here is what Jesus told us we need to do:

Matt 4:17 ...Jesus began to preach and to say, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

It is crucial that we surrender our lives to Jesus today, obey His word, receive the forgiveness of our sins through baptism in His name, and live a life of holiness until our dying day (or until the Church is caught up to meet Him in the air). Then we will be able to participate in the events God revealed to His apostle John:

Rev. 7:9-17 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴ And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And **He who sits on the throne will**

dwell among them. 16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The phrase at the end of v.15 is reminiscent of God’s words to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

Ex. 25:8 “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, **that I may dwell among them.**”

Here is what really makes Heaven heaven: we will be living in the presence of God throughout all eternity. He wants us to live with Him, and of course, this should also be our greatest desire!

John’s vision continues in Rev. 19:

Rev. 19:4-9 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!” 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!” 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

When we live godly lives, pleasing to Him, we can expect to take our place in the bride of Christ. After receiving the full and free salvation Jesus has graciously given to us, we embark upon a preparation process in anticipation of the big day – the day the Lamb marries His bride!

We live righteous lives in this present age, which is the material we need to construct our wedding garments – the bright, clean linen robes John saw. The robes that represent the righteousness we received by faith in Jesus in the first place. He gives us everything we need to get to Heaven!

Rom. 3:21-22a But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even **the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.**

Rom. 4:3-5 ...what does the Scripture say? *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith is accounted for righteousness.**

Then John takes us to the final part of his vision:

Rev. 21:1-9,22-27 ... I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, **“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”** ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death,

nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” 6 And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” ***(THAT’S US!)***

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

All of the splendour we read about in the New Jerusalem will take our breath away and cause us to fall on our faces in worship and praise to God, but as singer/songwriter Lanny Wolfe wrote: “Jesus will be what makes it Heaven for me.”

**Songs: Oh I Want To See Him – F# (Sing Unto The Lord #2)
What A Day That Will Be When My Jesus I Shall See – F#**

Appendix:

Missionary Homecoming

An old missionary couple had been working in Africa for years and was returning to New York to retire. They had no pension; their health was broken; they felt defeated, discouraged, and afraid.

As the trip began, they discovered they were on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions.

No one paid any attention to them. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the President's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the great man. As the ship moved across the ocean, the old missionary said to his wife, "Something is wrong."

"Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody makes much over him, but nobody gives two hoots about us."

"Dear, you shouldn't feel that way," his wife said.

He replied "I can't help it; it just doesn't seem right."

When the ship docked in New York, a band was waiting to greet the President. The mayor and other dignitaries were there. The papers were full of the President's arrival. No one noticed the missionary couple. They slipped off the ship, disappeared in the crowd, and found a cheap flat on the East Side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city.

That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife, "I can't take this; God is not treating us fairly." His wife replied, "Why don't you go in the bedroom and tell that to the Lord?"

A short time later he came out from the bedroom, but now his face was completely different. His wife asked, "Dear, what happened?"

The Lord settled it with me. I told Him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when

no one met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said: "You're not home yet."

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